

October 2009

Community and Technical College Performance Measures

Background

In 2004, the Legislature enacted House Bill 3103 (codified as RCW 28B.76.270), which charged the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) with developing an accountability monitoring and reporting system. The HECB is further charged with adopting biennial performance targets for each public four-year institution and for the community and technical college system. Finally, the HECB is directed to review results annually and to report results to the Governor and the Legislature on a biennial basis. The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) is directed in the statute to set biennial performance targets for each college or district, as appropriate.

In 2006, the HECB, in collaboration with the Office of Financial Management (OFM), the Council of Presidents (COP), and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, developed an accountability framework that includes performance measures for the four-year system and the two-year system. Both the HECB and OFM adopted performance targets on the defined performance measures. The 2007-09 biennial budget incorporated the performance measures and targets from the accountability framework, and directed the HECB and OFM to review and revise the performance targets in light of the increased per student funding authorized in 2007-09.

The four-year system measures and targets were not incorporated in the 2009-11 budget in part due to adoption of performance agreement legislation in 2008 which was assumed could lead to revised measures and targets. A 2009-11 budget proviso requires the SBCTC, HECB, and OFM by September 1, 2009, to “review and to the extent necessary revise current 2009-11 performance measures and targets” based on the resources made available through the budgets. The three agencies are further directed to “develop new performance targets for the 2011-13 and the 2013-15 biennia that will guide and measure the community and technical college system’s contributions to achievement of the state’s higher education master plan goals.” (ESHB 1244, section 605(7))

Current Framework

The current accountability framework provides four performance measures for the community and technical college system. Associate degree production is one measure. The other three were developed by the SBCTC to reflect each of the three mission areas – academic transfer, workforce development, and basic skills development. Specifically, these measures are:

- Transfer Ready – defined as completing at least 45 credits in core courses with at least a 2.0 GPA.
- Prepared for work – defined as completing a professional or technical certificate or degree program and achieving industry skill standards.
- Basic Skills – defined as gaining at least one competency level on a test after taking an Adult Basic Education or English as a Second Language course.

The accountability framework also includes a measure for the transfer rate from two-year to four-year institutions. This measure was not intended as a performance measure of the two-year colleges, but rather as a gauge of the system as a whole, including both the two-year and four-year sectors.

However, this intention has not always been well understood, and the targets for the transfer rate currently in place were developed by the SBCTC and may appear to some accountability report readers as though they are perceived as performance measures of the two-year system. This interpretation is understandable but is not consistent with the intention of the accountability framework or the description of the measure in the original reports discussing the issue. The transfer measure will be retained as a system measure in the accountability framework for future reports.

Student Achievement Initiative

The SBCTC developed a document called Strategic Directions, which outlines principles to guide mission implementation and long range planning for the two-year system. With the Strategic Directions statement as a foundation, the SBCTC developed a proposal known as the Student Achievement Initiative. It is a process by which individual colleges are able to earn incremental additional funding as their students achieve certain outcomes described as “momentum points” on the path toward completion of programs that require at least one year of college and completion of a certificate or degree program.

The 2007-09 state budget included \$4 million for the two-year system to serve TRIO-eligible students with a focus on retention and completion rates. This proviso funding became the seed money with which the Student Achievement Initiative was launched. The 2009-11 budget provided \$3.5 million for support of the Student Achievement Initiative. An additional \$1.6 million has been added to the rewards by foundations interested in the national implications for the measures. The SBCTC has begun transitioning its accountability monitoring and reporting to use the Student Achievement Initiative indicators, rather than the mission-related indicators used in the past. In 2008, the SBCTC modified indicators used in the Government Management and

Accountability Performance (GMAP) program to include these new Student Achievement Initiative measures as indicators of “foundations of success” in the “economic vitality” dashboard. The SBCTC has requested that the HECB revise the accountability framework to include the Student Achievement indicators to replace the existing mission-based indicators. The student achievement indicators (listed below) represent a system of measurement and accountability that spans the mission areas rather than presenting a single indicator for each mission area.

There are four categories of Achievement measures:

- Building towards college-level skills:
 - basic skills gains,
 - passing precollege writing or math
- First year retention:
 - earning 15 college-level quarter credits
 - earning 30 college-level quarter credits
- Completing college-level math (passing math courses required for either technical or academic associate degrees)
- Completions (degrees, certificates, apprenticeship training)

While these measures differ somewhat from the current measures, they are the key measures in a continuous improvement system being implemented by the SBCTC and cover the same broad concerns. Table 1 provides a crosswalk to give a sense of how the measures compare.

Table 1: Current and Proposed Measures

Current Measure	Proposed Student Achievement Measures	Notes
Transfer Ready	Earning 15 college-level credits Earning 30 college-level credits Completing College-Level Math	The three proposed achievement measures break out key components of the “transfer ready” measure. Perhaps most important is the completion of college ready math. In addition, the revised measure tracks two key “momentum points” that are solid predictors of degree or certificate completion.
Associate Degrees Completed Prepared for Work	Completions	The proposed completions measure includes two current measures, combining the Associate Degree Completion and Prepared for Work measures. The current Prepared for Work measure also includes non-credential earners who completed individualized plans or at least one year of college level workforce education. The proposed Student Achievement completions measure includes degrees, long-term certificates, and apprenticeship completers. In addition, it

		counts students who complete a short-term certificate, if they have already completed at least a year of college. These short-term certificate earners were found to show gains in employment outcomes and earnings in the SBCTC “tipping point” analysis. In 2008, short-term certificate earners with a year of college accounted for 2,727 completions out of a total of 23,447 completions for the year, 12% of the total completions reported.
Basic Skills	Basic Skills Gains Passing pre-college math or writing.	The current Basic Skills measure includes the number of students who improved their basic skills by one competency level. The proposed measures provide a cumulative look at skills gains (basic skills gains) as well as a more specific indicator looking at pre-college math and writing.

Proposed Targets

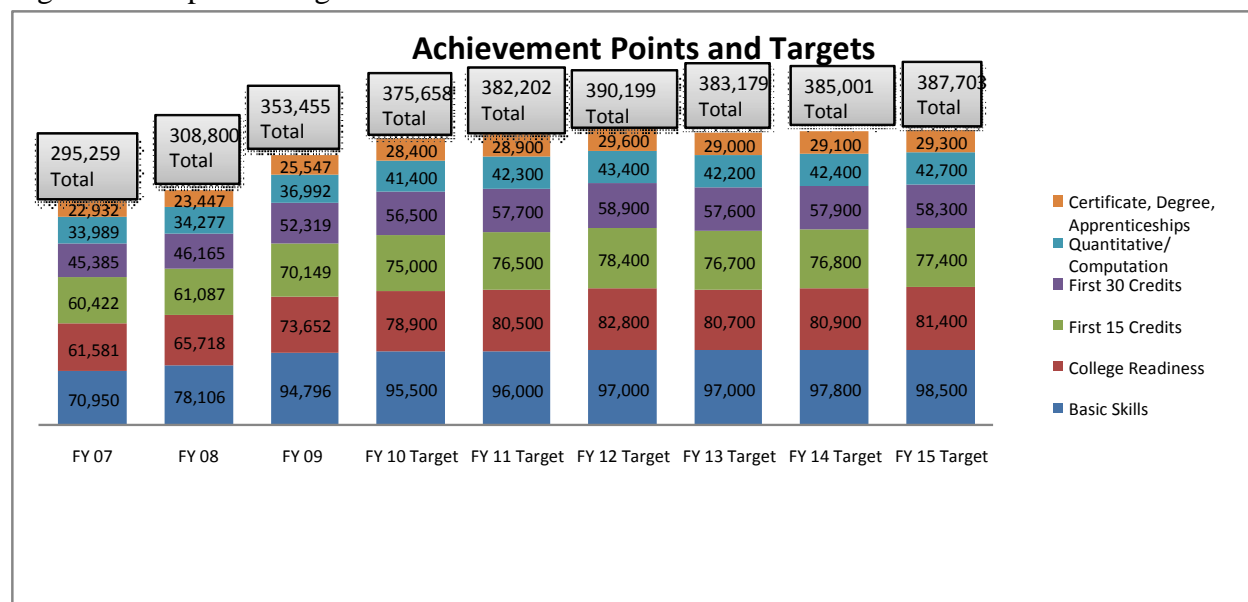
The Student Achievement Initiative measures incremental gains students make, where each gain increases a student’s likelihood for completion. All students, regardless of program, are measured for gains that prepare them for college-level work and their success in achieving first-year college milestones or college completion. The gains are translated into point gains, which colleges earn when they enroll more students and improve practices to advance students along their educational pathways. To see where the point gains are derived, we compare the one-year change in the number of students (headcount) to the one-year change in achievement points. For example, in Table 2 below we see that the one-year percent change in students (headcount) from FY 08 to FY 09 was 2 percent, while the total point change was 14 percent, substantially more than the change that could be attributed to simply enrolling more students. The percentage change in completions was also much higher than the proportional change in enrollment. The number of students seeking to meet first year college milestones was unchanged, yet all three milestones were reached by substantially more students. Point gains increased faster than student enrollments, which suggests colleges are becoming more effective at advancing their students.

Table 2: One-Year Change FY08 to FY 09 in Percent of Students by Milestone Start and Point Gain End

	Total Headcount Growth	Basic Skills	Pre College	Started Year less than 15 Cr	Started Year Less than 30 Credits	Started No College Math	Completions
One-Year Change in Students	4%	15%	7%	3%	3%	4%	4%
One-Year Change in Points Earned	14%	21%	12%	15%	13%	8%	9%

The proposed targets (Figure 1) reflect anticipated changes in the enrollment over the projection period as well as performance improvements in all six indicators over time. The overall target drops from a peak of 390,199 points in FY12 to a total of 387,703 in FY15. This change is primarily due to an expected decline in enrollment associated with an anticipated economic recovery resulting in falling enrollments in the worker retraining program. The worker retraining program is expected to peak at 16,000 students in FY11 and contract to 5,000 students in FY15 (slightly below the 2007 level of 6,100). One way to assess the improvement in effectiveness with a changing population is to analyze the number of points earned per FTE. During the projection period, we found continuous improvement in the number of points earned per FTE. In the base year, 2007, approximately 2 points were earned per FTE student. Based on the projected enrollments and target for points earned in 2015 the SBCTC expects approximately 2.5 points per FTE system wide in 2015. This change represents an increase in effectiveness of 19 percent between 2007 and 2015.

Figure 1: Proposed Targets



Analysis and Recommendation

Overall, the proposed new measures represent an improvement in our ability to track progress and encourage improvement in the performance of the Community and Technical College System. Key to this change is the establishment of indicators at various steps in a student's development. The indicators were selected based upon research by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, in conjunction with the Community College Research Center. The indicators span mission areas and include not only outcome based measures but also process measures at key milestones. This allows institutions to select an improvement strategy that focuses on the areas where they see the greatest need for improvement. For example, some institutions serve much larger numbers of basic skills students. Improving the outcomes for those students will "count" toward their accountability targets. In addition, those skill gains may help students move on to college level work.

The completions measure in the proposed framework is similar to the measure used for the *Master Plan* goal; however, neither the student achievement indicators nor the current indicators precisely match the primary outcome measure of the *Master Plan*. The *Master Plan* goal at the mid-level is based upon completed associate degrees, long terms certificates (one year or longer), and apprenticeship completions. The completions measure in the student achievement initiative includes all of these elements, but it also includes students who have completed at least a year of college and a short-term certificate. The various categories of completers can easily be disaggregated in the reporting of actual results but they are not disaggregated in the current projections and goals.

Inclusion of the student achievement indicators into the accountability framework would allow for simplification in reporting by the SBCTC and the individual community and technical colleges. The metrics would match those used within the system accountability framework and those used in the GMAP process. This would provide for greater consistency in reporting and should make the reporting process less onerous for the CTCs and the SBCTC. The SBCTC has secured further assistance from the Community College Research Center to conduct an ongoing independent evaluation of the Student Achievement Initiative over the next five years.

Based on a review of the proposed indicators, staff believe the SBCTC has established goals that will lead to continuous improvement in the performance of the system and foster improvement at all level, leading to more students completing degrees and certificates. Staff recommend approval of the proposed change in the accountability framework at the mid-level and the targets proposed by the SBCTC.

RESOLUTION NO. 09-24

WHEREAS, In 2004, the Legislature enacted House Bill 3103 (codified as RCW 28B.76.270) which charged the Higher Education Coordinating Board with developing an accountability monitoring and reporting system; and

WHEREAS, In 2006, the HECB, in collaboration with the Office of Financial Management (OFM), the Council of Presidents (COP), and the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), developed an accountability framework that includes performance measures for the four-year system and the two-year system; and

WHEREAS, A 2009-11 budget proviso requires the SBCTC, HECB, and OFM to “review and to the extent necessary revise current 2009-11 performance measures and targets” based on the resources made available through the budgets, and the three agencies are further directed to “develop new performance targets for the 2011-13 and the 2013-15 biennia that will guide and measure the community and technical college system’s contributions to achievement of the state’s higher education master plan goals”; and

WHEREAS, The SBCTC has developed a new performance measurement system, the Student Achievement Initiative, which measures six “momentum points” that represent key steps in students’ progress toward achieving certificates or degrees, where the gains increase a student’s likelihood for completion; and

WHEREAS, The SBCTC has requested that the HECB and OFM adopt the student achievement initiative measures in place of the existing measures included in the accountability framework; and

WHEREAS, The proposed new measures represent an improvement in the state’s ability to track progress and encourage improvement in the performance of the Community and Technical College System and the SBCTC has established goals that will lead to continuous improvement in the performance of the system and foster improvement at all levels – leading to more students completing degrees and certificates; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts the revised measures and targets contained in the attached document.

Adopted: October 27, 2009

Attest:

Jesús Hernandez, Chair

Roberta Greene, Secretary